

**Finding of No Significant Impact
Elk Creek Restoration and Water Quality Project
Environmental Assessment ID-110-2007-EA-3587**

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in EA#ID110-2007-EA-3587 would not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This finding was made by considering both the context and intensity of the potential effects, as described in the above EA, using the following factors defining significance:

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The Proposed Action would have beneficial effects to water quality, vegetation, soils/watershed, migratory bird, fisheries, visual resources, and cultural resources (Sections 3.1 – 3.7, EA # ID110-2007-EA-3587). The Proposed Action would directly improve the drinking water quality in Elk Creek, and reduce sediment recruitment to Mores Creek.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

Elk Creek is the direct drinking water source for Idaho City. During spring runoff, sediment and high turbidity levels in the water source often result in a Health District Boil Order for Idaho City drinking water. The action would have a positive affect on public health and safety by reducing suspended sediment load into Elk Creek originating from public land by as much as 85 percent.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

No major effects on unique characteristics are identified in the EA. No adverse effects on cultural or historical resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas were identified in the EA (Sections 3.7.1; 3.4)

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The analysis did not identify any controversy or substantial disagreement concerning the positive effects on the quality of the human environment by improving the drinking water quality in Elk Creek. Public response by all those affected by this project was very positive, and projects which have been completed in the watershed received good support from the local community.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The conservation measures recommended in the proposed action used to reduce erosion and improve water quality are well understood and proven by many federal, state and private entities.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The proposed action is independent of all other actions in the watershed and does not represent a commitment of BLM resources beyond that described in the Environmental Assessment.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The proposed action is one part of a larger project that addresses issues and opportunities that cross ownership boundaries, and involves the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), private landowners, and BLM (EA Sections 1.2 & 3.9.2).

If the actions outlined in the proposed action, and the rest of the projects proposed for the entire area occur, the Mores Creek watershed should undergo considerable improvements in water quality, improved fish and aquatic habitat quality, flood control, riparian vegetation, visual resources, recreation resources, wildlife habitat, and would improve the social and economic situation of Idaho City. Although this project addresses but a small component of the watershed erosion issue in the Mores Creek watershed, it does represent a significant contribution toward reduction of sediment in Elk Creek, and thus cumulatively reducing sediments yielded downstream into Mores Creek.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

The analysis showed that the action would not result in a significant adverse effect to cultural or historic resources (EA Section 3.7).

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

The analysis showed that no endangered or threatened species occur in the project area (EA Section 3.6.1).

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.*

The action does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law, or requirements imposed for protection of the environment. The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable Land Use Plan and all State and Federal statutes (EA Sections 1.4 and 1.5).

/s/ Rosemary Thomas
Four Rivers Field Manager

Date